

Newly elected General Superior, Mary Margaret Johanning, SSND asks that she be called “Sister,” “not Mother.”

Circular Letter 5b/78
July 17, 1978

Dear Sisters,

... Your general chapter delegates have probably shared with you my request to be called “Sister” rather than “Mother.” Before the General Chapter concluded, I spent time in prayer and reflection about this and spoke with each provincial and regional leader regarding the change. The gospels have Jesus say “You must not allow yourselves to be called ‘Rabbi,’ since you have only one master and you are all brothers and sisters.” In another text Jesus expresses His own desire, “I am among you as one who serves.” Sisters, my deepest desire is to be among you as one who serves, to be among you as Sister. Furthermore, time does not stand still; it brings changed expressions and understandings. Many of us recall that the title “Reverend Mother” was the official title of most of our former Superiors General. It was only in 1968 that the title, “Reverend” was omitted and Mother Georgianne came to be known as “Mother.” Thank you for acceding to my request to be called Sister Mary Margaret; I hope to live out with all that this name means to me...